



GRAY DAVIS, GOVERNOR
MARIA CONTRERAS-SWEET, SECRETARY OF BUSINESS, TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING AGENCY
JEFF MORALES, DIRECTOR
ROBERT W. SASSAMAN, DISTRICT 7 DIRECTOR

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Inside Seven—a District 7 Edition of the *CT News*

CARPOOL LANE OPENING ON SAN DIEGO FREEWAY (I-405) EASES CONGESTION IN SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

By Ivy Estrada

On Friday, February 22, Governor Gray Davis, Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet, Business, Transportation and Housing Agency and Jeff Morales, Caltrans Director were joined by local elected and San Fernando Valley officials for the grand opening and sign unveiling of the southbound San Diego Freeway (I-405) High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane. The ceremony was held at the Sherman Oaks Galleria in the lobby of the Pacific Theater overlooking the panoramic view of I-405. The event signified the official completion of the \$20.5-million project. The 7.8-mile HOV lane stretches from the San Fernando Valley to West Los Angeles, an addition that brings the total to 17.9 HOV lane miles along southbound I-405 through the San Fernando Valley. "Already since its early opening to motorists January 8, the average user is saving 18 minutes every ride," said Governor Davis.

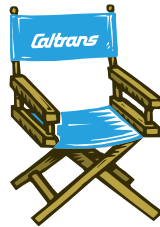
Governor Davis' goal is to ease traffic congestion for Los Angeles and statewide commuters by investing in mass transit and railway and highway expansion projects. As part of the Governor's statewide Transportation Congestion Relief Plan (TCRP), three other major projects are planned for the I-405 corridor in the vicinity of this new project. Also under way is a Corridor Study for possible expansion of the Ventura Freeway (101), a 40-mile stretch between the Pasadena Freeway (I-110) in Downtown Los Angeles and Route 23 in Ventura County. In addition to these multi-modal projects, the \$4-billion State Highway Operations Protection Program is a continuous statewide operation to preserve and protect the state highway system for commuters, tourists, goods and services movement and commerce.

According to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority which provided 90% of the funding for the I-405 HOV lane, 51 additional miles of carpool lanes are currently under construction, and 301 are in the planning stages. These efforts are part of a larger plan to double the number of carpool lanes in Los Angeles County by the year 2015.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) wishes to thank Douglas Emmett & Company for hosting the event and the Sherman Oaks Galleria Pacific Theaters for providing the wonderful location. A special "thank you" goes to Patricia Neill, Douglas Emmett & Company for helping to coordinate the event and for providing the lovely mementos of cookies made in the shape and colors of the I-405 shield — a great and thoughtful touch! •



Governor Gray Davis unveils the new sign for the southbound I-405 HOV lane in the San Fernando Valley, where the average user is now saving 18 minutes every ride.



THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

The year 2002 has started off to be a very busy year indeed — and it's going to get even busier. Looking at our important Construction schedule, District 7 will have \$1.4 billion in highway improvement projects under construction in Los Angeles and Ventura counties during this calendar year. Some projects were already under construction as the year began, others will start this year and some will complete. This is noteworthy because on most of our major projects that will begin construction, there will be a groundbreaking ceremony — and where we are completing a major project, we will hold a ribbon-cutting or grand opening ceremony. These ceremonies will help to inform the public of just how vast our highway improvement program is and how hard you are all working to help improve mobility across California.

We recently held an excellent grand opening ceremony for completion of the southbound San Diego Freeway (I-405) High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane, which stretches from the Ventura Freeway (101) to Waterford Drive in the San Fernando Valley. Governor Gray Davis was the keynote speaker and it was very well attended. KFWB radio veteran traffic reporter, Jeff Baugh, said of the HOV lane opening: "This morning's opening of the HOV lane on the 405 Freeway at the 101 is the most miraculous transformation of a traffic tie-up I've ever seen. It changes the entire look of the freeway... I was worried about it creating a bottleneck at Wilshire Boulevard, but it didn't. They turned ridesharing into the fast lane! You all get an A+++ on this one. Hat's off to the Caltrans engineers!"

During the following week another groundbreaking ceremony took place for the San Bernardino Freeway (I-10) HOV lane from Baldwin Avenue to the San Gabriel River Freeway (605). Business, Transportation and Housing Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet gave the keynote address and this event was also well attended by the media and many local legislators.

Another large media event will be taking place here at the District Office Building (DOB). The focus of this event is to highlight the improvement projects that are being done in the transportation area, including highways, rail and transit facilities — as well as the work that our partners, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), the Ventura County Transportation Commission and Metrolink, are assisting us in delivering. When all the transit and rail system work is added to the highway construction projects for this year, the total increases will be over \$2 billion in transportation improvements in 2002 for the District 7 area.

Looking ahead there is the potential for an event nearly every week in the District, whether a groundbreaking or ribbon-cutting ceremony. Many staff members will be very busy preparing for these important events, which offer an excellent opportunity to showcase the important transportation projects we have been working on and the many improvements ahead.

In reviewing our figures, the amount of work produced by District 7 has increased by about 50% over what was delivered three years ago. This increase is due to accelerated delivery methods, a better-trained staff, more funding — particularly Transportation Congestion Relief Plan (TCRP) funds provided by Governor Gray Davis — and the emphasis by the Governor's administration on the transportation needs in California. District 7 has also come a long way in mastering project management and we are getting a lot closer to being project-driven rather than program-driven in our delivery methods. This, in itself, is one of the key reasons the District has delivered projects on an accelerated basis and is delivering them on time and within budget. Congratulations to all of you in all functions as everyone has contributed to making project management work!

The much anticipated and exciting groundbreaking ceremony for our new DOB will be coming soon. Many dignitaries are expected to attend. Our new DOB will be the model for future architecture in the Downtown Los Angeles area. The building's floor plan is large; has been planned based on suggestions from employees; and there is room for entire divisions on the same floor. Some innovations include interior stairwells and elevators with "skip stops." I am personally looking forward to seeing our new, state-of-the-art building completed so that all District office employees can be back in the same facility working together. I wish to commend all of you, once again, for keeping communications on a very high level while we have been separated into four different locations. While our high-tech telephone, email and fax systems help, it is the excellent communications skills of the Caltrans District 7 staff in keeping each other continually informed, which have kept our important highway improvement projects on schedule for California's commuters. Let's continue to keep all our deliverables on time — or ahead of time — in 2002! •

ROBERT W. SASSAMAN
District Director

Nine Miles Of Santa Monica Freeway Renamed The “Rosa Parks Freeway”

By Margie Tiritilli

In honor of the “Mother of the Modern Day Civil Rights Movement,” a nine-mile stretch of the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10) between the Harbor Freeway (I-110) and the San Diego Freeway (I-405) in Los Angeles was officially renamed the “Rosa Parks Freeway.”

The 89-year-old honoree was not able to attend. However, she was praised for the courage she displayed by taking on a system that was brutally unjust to an important part of our population.

Because of Ms. Parks’ determination and strength of character that allowed her to take a stand for what was — and is right — millions of Americans today are the beneficiaries. Doors once closed — are now open in educational opportunities, better paying jobs and decent housing. America has made great strides in this effort. The hope is, that in the very near future, the word discrimination will be just that — a word in the dictionary that no American ever again will have to endure.

The naming of the “Rosa Parks Freeway” came about by legislation introduced by Assemblyman Herb Wesson under Assembly Concurrent Resolution 134 on January 15, 2002.

February 8 is also significant because it marks the day Mr. Wesson was sworn-in as Speaker at an earlier ceremony at UCLA. Joining the Speaker were Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, local elected officials, Caltrans, Los Angeles Department of Transportation and community groups.

New I-10 Freeway signs noting the “Rosa Parks Freeway” are located on westbound I-10 just west of the Harbor Freeway and on eastbound I-10 just east of the San Diego Freeway. Each sign is 120” x 48”.

A 1955 re-enactment bus ride/motorcade made its way from the Staples Center in Downtown Los Angeles to Crenshaw Boulevard adjacent to I-10 where the event was held. Riding in the



Left to right: Councilman Mark Ridley Thomas, Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet and Assemblyman Herb Wesson celebrate the new Rosa Parks Freeway.

bus were Speaker Wesson and his guests.

Rosa Parks was born on February 4, 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama. After a tiring day at work, she caught a bus and found an empty seat in the front. When a white man boarded, she was ordered to give up her seat. Ms. Parks refused. She was arrested December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama. Her stand for equal rights is legendary. Ms. Parks’ refusal to comply with the Alabama Segregation Law was the impetus for a boycott of Montgomery buses led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Standing with Dr. King, were 42,000 African Americans. The boycott lasted 381 days.

On November 13, 1956, the United States Supreme Court ruled that Montgomery’s Segregation Law was unconstitutional. On December 20, 1956, Montgomery officials were ordered to desegregate buses. Because Rosa Parks showed determination and tremendous courage under extraordinary circumstances, she has become known as “The Mother of the Modern Day Civil Rights Movement.” Her digni-

fied refusal to surrender her seat inspired the Civil Rights Movement which directly resulted in the breakdown of numerous legal barriers as well as the lessening of profound discrimination against African Americans in the United States. Ms. Parks’ strength and courage of her convictions laid the foundation for equal rights for all Americans and for the Civil Rights Act of Ms. Parks has been honored over the course of her historic stand to remain seated. Some of the distinguished awards she received include: The Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation’s highest civilian honor, and the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor, the highest honor Congress can bestow upon a civilian.

Rosa Parks has dedicated her life to the cause of Human Rights and has effectively demonstrated her love of humanity and freedom. She continues to serve as a model and encouragement for others by showing what one, single person can do in the name of justice — for all people — and — for all worthy causes. •



Breaking ground for the I-10 carpool lanes in El Monte. Left to right: Councilman Ernie Gutierrez, City of El Monte; Commissioner Esteban Torres, California Transportation Commission; Congresswoman Hilda Solis; Roger Snoble, Chief Executive Officer, Metropolitan Transportation Authority; Commissioner Allen Lawrence, California Transportation Commission; Mayor Rachel Montes, City of El Monte; Mayor Manuel Lozano, City of Baldwin Park; Robert W. Sassaman, Caltrans District 7 Director; Maria Contreras-Sweet, Secretary, Business, Transportation and Housing Agency; and Assemblyman Ed Chavez.

Groundbreaking Ceremony For I-10 Carpool Lanes In El Monte

In the city of El Monte, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to celebrate the beginning of construction of a new \$41.5-million High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane and widening project on the San Bernardino Freeway (I-10) from Baldwin Avenue to the San Gabriel River Freeway (Route 605) in the cities of El Monte and Baldwin Park. Construction will be completed in four stages.

Governor Gray Davis, who was not able to attend, said, "Since taking office, I have

made improving the transportation infrastructure one of my highest priorities. This project will serve as an example of my commitment to transportation and my goal to keep California moving. The purpose of HOV lanes is reduction of congestion in addition to providing incentives for commuters to rideshare. Once completed, this project will provide some much needed relief in this area."

Business, Transportation and Housing Secretary, Maria Contreras-Sweet was the keynote speaker and was joined by local elected officials and other dignitaries.

The project will feature one HOV lane in each direction of the freeway. It will also widen the freeway from the current eight lanes to ten. The widening will allow the freeway to accommodate the new HOV lanes. The length of the project is 3.2 miles. As part of the project, 14 bridge structures will be widened and the Utah Street pedestrian undercrossing will be extended. In addition, on- and off-ramps will be modified and soundwalls will be added or modified. Auxiliary lanes will also be added at selected locations.

Construction began last year on HOV lanes on Interstate 10 in the cities of Claremont, Pomona and La Verne. This project is nearing completion. There are three other I-10 HOV projects slated to begin construction in 2005. •



Celebrating a new interchange! Left to right: Henry Taboada, Long Beach City Manager; Karen Fong, Caltrans Design Office Chief; Jackie Kell, Long Beach Councilmember; Mayor Beverly O'Neill, City of Long Beach; Brian Hall, President, LAPCO Construction; Petra A. Prida, former Mayor of Hawaiian Gardens; and Edward K. Shikada, Long Beach Director of Public Works.

Ribbon-Cutting For New I-605/Carson Street Interchange

By Patricia Reid

Caltrans partnered recently with the City of Long Beach to assist them with their Grand Opening ceremony at the Long Beach Towne Center for the new Carson Street loop ramp that gives motorists access to northbound San Gabriel River Freeway (I-605). This ramp opening marked the final improvement to the I-605/Carson Street Interchange. Caltrans Design Chief

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EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Caltrans' first ever "Please Don't Drink and Drive" signs are officially placed near the Antelope Valley Freeway (14) near Acton in remembrance of Maintenance Worker Calle "Joel" Buser. Left to right: Patty Kelly, representing Senator William J. "Pete" Knight; Assemblyman Dennis Mountjoy; Karen Mendenhall, representing Mothers Against Drunk Drivers; Doug Failing, Caltrans Chief Deputy, District 7; Norma Buser, widow of Calle "Joel" Buser and daughters Cindy Gooch and Heidi Love; and Assistant Chief Gary A. Eberhard, California Highway Patrol.

1st Freeway "Don't Drink And Drive" Sign Unveiled On Route 14

By James C. Deno

On February 26, Caltrans unveiled its first ever "Don't Drink and Drive" freeway sign in memory of Callie "Joel" Buser, Jr., a Caltrans Surveyor, who was struck and killed on July 29, 1992 by a drugged driver while performing survey work on the Antelope Valley Freeway (14) near Acton. Buser was the fifth highway worker in 1992 to be killed on the job by impaired and errant drivers. Because of this, Senate Bill 1388 was approved and signed by former Governor Pete Wilson who issued a proclamation declaring hereafter April 28 as "Worker's Memorial Day." Assemblyman Dennis Mountjoy of Monrovia was very instrumental in introducing AB 965 in February of 2001, which made these signs possible.

Since 1924, a total of 157 highway workers have died across the state performing construction and maintenance work. As of 1972, 70 Caltrans employees of which 33 were assigned to the District 7 office, died while in the line of duty. The special blue and white sign may also be used to commemorate the death of non-Caltrans residents provided certain guidelines are met according to the California Department of Transportation Memorial Sign Program. To qualify, a written request must be sent to the California Department of Transportation from a family member of the deceased victim. The request must include a copy of the police accident report as well as proof that the impaired driver was convicted of causing the death. This can be provided from court records. The cost of a sign is \$1,000, which must be paid for by the requestor.

Mr. Buser came to California in April, 1991, from Missouri where he was in the surveying business. He was with Caltrans a little over a year when he was killed. At the time of his death, he was working to make California's freeways safer for all commuters. His contribution was considered to be significant by those who knew him. •



District 7 Director Robert W. Sassaman, right, presents Seyed "Amir" Torabzadeh with a well-deserved Certificate of Recognition for his efforts on behalf of the Disability Advisory Committee.

Seyed (Amir) Torabzadeh Receives Certificate Of Recognition

Seyed (Amir) Torabzadeh, Research Program Specialist II and District 7's Traffic Accident Surveillance and Analysis System (TASAS) Coordinator for the Division of Operations, was honored recently by receiving a special Certificate of Recognition for his many contributions as the volunteer Chairperson of the Disability Advisory Committee (DAC). Torabzadeh has been involved with the DAC since 1988 and has served for five of those years as Chairperson. His certificate reads, "...In recognition and appreciation of your dedicated service, leadership and commitment to the District 7 Disability Advisory Committee."

Through a close partnership with the Department, the DAC works hard to ensure that Caltrans addresses the

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Nurses from the American Red Cross receive life-saving gifts of blood donations from Caltrans volunteers.

Another Successful American Red Cross Blood Drive!

Many thanks to each and every one of the 61 Caltrans employees who rolled up their sleeves and participated in the recent American Red Cross Blood Drive. This event marked the 14th year that Caltrans employees heeded the call for help from the American Red Cross.

"I began working with the blood donation drive in 1998 as the District's Lead Coordinator," said Leonard Thompson. "It was just my attempt to give back to those in need." Thompson continued to support and coordinate with the American Red Cross recruiter of each blood donation drive. "Collectively, we were able to recruit enough volunteers to obtain 59 units of blood (average is 45 units per drive)," said Thompson. "Our highest achievement was November 2001 following the September 11, 2001 terrorist event. And the Red Cross is always very appreciative of Caltrans' efforts and cooperation at each blood drive." •

Project Development Branch C Celebrates \$107-Million Santa Clara River Bridge Improvement



Project Development Branch C held a celebration recently as they delivered the plans, specifications and estimate for the replacement and widening from six to 12 lanes of the Santa Clara River Bridge on the Ventura Freeway (101) in the cities of Oxnard and Ventura. "The \$107-million project, the largest in Ventura County, is also significant for the District because it demonstrates the great work the Caltrans staff is capable of doing," said Tony Velasquez (center holding cake), former Project Manager. Velasquez said he would like to thank the following for their teamwork: Orlan Lee, Senior Transportation Engineer; Paul Tran, Lead Designer; Ron Kosinski, Deputy District Director, Environmental Planning; Richard Galvin, Environmental Planner; Dan Murdoch, Right of Way Coordinator; Mark Reno, Senior Bridge Engineer; Samia Maximous, Ventura County Transportation Commission; Cynthia Daniels, City of Oxnard; Sue Broidy, Assemblymember Hanna Beth Jackson's office; and Cindy Cunningham, Senator Jack O'Connell's office; and all members of his dedicated team. •

Seyed Torabzadeh

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needs and abilities of employees and applicants with disabilities. The main goals of the DAC are to provide and enhance opportunities and accessibility to Departmental programs, services and activities for employees and applicants with disabilities; and to help ensure that the Caltrans qualified, motivated workforce, just as represented in California's greater workforce, includes persons with disabilities. "My goal is to help the Department meet its goals and bring qualified, motivated employees into the District to join the workforce and make valuable contributions to Caltrans," Torabzadeh said.

Torabzadeh added that DAC has accomplished much over the years, including: taking part in outreach programs for recruiting qualified disabled employees; the District's efforts in complying with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements; participation in Caltrans' statewide self-evaluation of its policies and practices in 2001; participation in emergency evacuation procedures meetings; working with the Office of Facilities Management and Equal Employment Opportunity to address and resolve accessibility, parking and reasonable accommodation issues; holding monthly meetings to discuss issues of concern to employees with disabilities and other related issues to bring to the attention of management; and members attend quarterly statewide video teleconferencing meetings.

Through these efforts, the DAC makes recommendations about departmental policies, programs, procedures and practices affecting persons with disabilities, as well as promoting education and training to increase sensitivity to and awareness of issues facing people with disabilities. Torabzadeh also said that the DAC works hard to keep the lines of communication open. "We strive to foster open and effective communication about issues facing people with disabilities," he said. "Not only is Caltrans the best transportation organ-

ization in the world, but we are setting the standards in contributing to society in terms of helping motivated and qualified employees to join the workforce and be part of the mainstream. I especially want to express my appreciation to the Caltrans management for their continued support. My involvement with DAC has been a great and rewarding experience and I would encourage anyone who is interested to get involved and make a difference."

Irene Coyazo, Chief, Equal Opportunity Office, said Torabzadeh deserves recognition for his years of service as Chairperson of the DAC. "His dedication and commitment toward achievement of DAC's goals and those of the Equal Opportunity Office are commendable," said Coyazo. "We are fortunate to have Seyed on our team!" •

I-605 Interchange

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Karen Fong said, "The improved interchange provides convenient freeway access to the new Long Beach Towne Center and also improves traffic flow on the I-605." Long Beach City Manager Henry Taboada commented on the value of Caltrans partnership and said, "...without whom the project wouldn't have been possible." He said, "Caltrans staff have always been there for us from the beginning." Brian Hill, president of LAPCO Construction, recognized Steve Silverman with Caltrans Construction Branch and thanked him for his dedication and hard work and for his willingness to do "whatever it took" to move the project forward. The beautiful banner was created by Monica Murillo, District 7 Graphic Artist. •

...RETIREE SPOTLIGHT...

Caltrans sends its best wishes for a long and happy retirement to the following employees and thanks them for a lifetime of dedicated state service:

Jerry Farr, *Maintenance Supervisor*, 41 Years

Nick Jones, *Associate Transportation Engineer*, 38 Years

Jerry Kanowitz, *Senior Right of Way Agent*, 35 Years

Willie Langie, *Supervising Right of Way Agent*, 40 Years

Stephan Pang, *Chief, Office of Construction*, 32 Years

Pat Perovich, *Supervising Transportation Engineer*, 31 Years

Gus Sulaitis, *Transportation Engineer*, 37 Years


Oscar Villacorte, *Senior Transportation Engineer*, 31 Years

OBITUARIES

Caltrans was saddened to learn of the passing of the following employees:

**Sal Mares, Ray Hinton, Peter Van Riper,
Stan Mixon and Jim Schiefer**

Our condolences and thoughts go out to the families of these fine employees who will be missed by all.

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